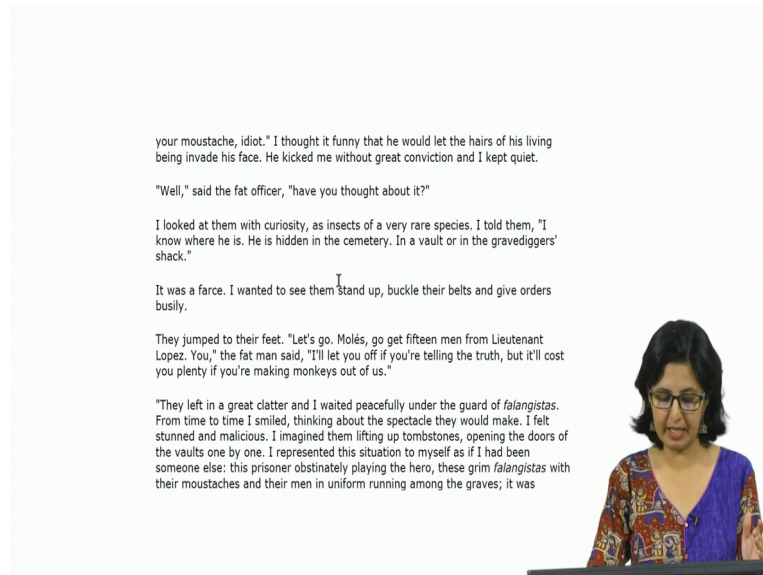


Introduction to World Literature
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The Wall by Sartre - II

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Hello and welcome back to today's session for the NPTEL course introduction to world literature. In the previous session we started discussing the short story *The Wall* written by Sartre the existentialist philosopher, the French philosopher, and today we come back to look at it and also look at some of the narrative elements and the existential theories which make the reading more complete. As we wrapped up the session in the last session I also left you with one missing link which was to identify that ironical twist which entirely change the course of the story.

So if you have read through the story you would also know that, there is something which happens in the middle right after midnight, after the sentences is being pronounced and before the execution takes place, there is this moment when public decides just to have some fun to engage in some fast and this is what he does. I looked at them with curiosity, as insects are very rare species. I told them I know where he is, we are talking about Ramon Grace, is hidden in the cemetery, in a vault or in gravediggers shack.

It was a farce. I want to see them stand up, buckle their belts and give orders busily. They jumped to their feet, let us go Moles, go get fifteen men from Lieutenant Lopez. You the fat man said, I will let you off if you are telling the truth, but I will cost you plenty if you are making monkeys out of us.

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They jumped to their feet. "Let's go. Molés, go get fifteen men from Lieutenant Lopez. You," the fat man said, "I'll let you off if you're telling the truth, but it'll cost you plenty if you're making monkeys out of us."

"They left in a great clatter and I waited peacefully under the guard of *falangistas*. From time to time I smiled, thinking about the spectacle they would make. I felt stunned and malicious. I imagined them lifting up tombstones, opening the doors of the vaults one by one. I represented this situation to myself as if I had been someone else: this prisoner obstinately playing the hero, these grim *falangistas* with their moustaches and their men in uniform running among the graves; it was irresistibly funny. After half an hour the little fat man came back alone. I thought he had come to give the orders to execute me. The others must have stayed in the cemetery.

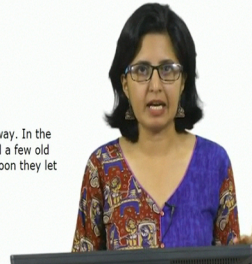
The officer looked at me. He didn't look at all sheepish. "Take him into the big courtyard with the others," he said. "After the military operations a regular court will decide what happens to him."

"Then they're not... not going to shoot me?..."

"Not now, anyway. What happens afterwards is none of my business."

I still didn't understand. I asked, "But why...?"

He shrugged his shoulders without answering and the soldiers took me away. In the big courtyard there were about a hundred prisoners, women, children and a few old men. I began walking around the central grass plot, I was stupefied. At noon they let



your moustache, idiot." I thought it funny that he would let the hairs of his living being invade his face. He kicked me without great conviction and I kept quiet.

"Well," said the fat officer, "have you thought about it?"

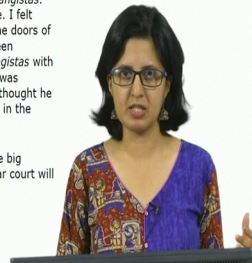
I looked at them with curiosity, as insects of a very rare species. I told them, "I know where he is. He is hidden in the cemetery. In a vault or in the gravediggers' shack."

It was a farce. I wanted to see them stand up, buckle their belts and give orders busily.

They jumped to their feet. "Let's go. Molés, go get fifteen men from Lieutenant Lopez. You," the fat man said, "I'll let you off if you're telling the truth, but it'll cost you plenty if you're making monkeys out of us."

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The officer looked at me. He didn't look at all sheepish. "Take him into the big courtyard with the others," he said. "After the military operations a regular court will



"I don't know," he said. "They arrest everybody who doesn't think the way they do." He lowered his voice. "They got Gris."

I began to tremble. "When?"

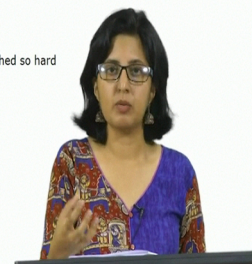
"This morning. He messed it up. He left his cousin's on Tuesday because they had an argument. There were plenty of people to hide him but he didn't want to owe anything to anybody. He said, 'I'd go and hide in Ibbieta's place, but they got him, so I'll go hide in the cemetery.'"

"In the cemetery?"

"Yes. What a fool. Of course they went by there this morning, that was sure to happen. They found him in the gravediggers' shack. He shot at them and they got him."

"In the cemetery!"

Everything began to spin and I found myself sitting on the ground: I laughed so hard I cried.



So this is something that Pablo had done, just to be farcical, just to make a mockery out of, you know, as the story itself says just to make monkeys out of those officers, he wanted to see them, stand up, buckle their belts and go about it as we are going to find Ramon Gris, but must to a surprise and much the irony of this story, what is the envy get to know that Ramon Gris was actually found hiding in the cemetery and get can shot dead and Ramon Gris is someone with Tom.

We already saw that Pablo, he shared a bond, Ramon Gris was hiding and deal leaving with him for a while and they also, he also say that had it be Ramon Gris instead of Tom and Juan with him, he would have felt more moved and this is how it ends, he gets to know that his life had been saved and cost of Pablos life and this is not something which he did deliberately but still it is he is doing it is the dilemma that the story in some level, is trying to explore as well, we get to know from whatever narration, whatever details it that we get through the narration, that this is not something that Pablo had intended to do, this is not something that he had plotted out, he had no intention and no reason to get Ramon Gris into trouble.

But we get to know that inadvertently Ramon Gris get killed and through that process. We find Pablo saving his life as well, this is the existential question that these story leads with us at some level, but of course as we mentioned towards the end of the previous session, this was also seen as a flaw, by a number of admirers and the tractors Sartre, that it is not really fit in, that it was not want to representative, text, where we find his existentialist theories being exemplified and look at the ending again.

Everything began to spin and I found myself sitting on the ground, I laughed so hard I cried, there is neatness to this plot, but there is also certain kind of uncertainty over here because one is not too sure what exactly Pablo is going through right now, whether he is really, feeling happy or will he feel miserable for the rest of his life, because this was his own doing and will be able to live with it and deal with it and engage with this dilemma and negotiate with it, for the rest of his life.

So I leave you with that question, but what I am more interested in first pursuing is to take a look at the narrative structure of this work, The Wall like a number of other short stories by Sartre, it is written in the first person and this also seems like an excellent choice for any work which gives a voice for existentialist agenda because it is very, very personal, very, very intense, I also wanted to think about Barth, Roland Barthes that this point in this work are writing degree is zero.

It talks about narrative techniques, he also argues that the first person, when one is using was person, there are two defining characteristics where it, one, the eye is usually a spectator, second is not like third person, it is not transparent, unlike the third person the eye also connotes obesity and particularly there is a certain contingency involved in it as well and for the existentialist speaker, when we talk about this story, both of this suits it very well.

Pablo is a spectator and is very opaque as well, there is no way in which we would get to what Pablo is exactly like, there is no way in which we would ever get know what Pablo felt throughout that night, and how he reacted when he gets to know that he has been saved, that is not going to shot dead and instead Ramon Gris has been shot dead and there is no way in which we would also get to know whether Pablo is telling us the truth because it is first person, it looks very, very real, there is an eyewitness kind of quality to it, but it is also very, very opaque, there is no way in which you can get inside because like the third person, the first person narrator would always stop the reader from getting inside.

The third person narrative we still have possibility of going inside and seeing and trying to analyse different ways, but the first personalitive is very, very limited in that sense as far as an engagement with the reader, the text is concern and the other thing that the first personalitive does as it clearly communicates with the reader, in a very direct way and tells us with which character that the reader is expected to identify the most, think about any of those works written in the first personality.

It is most likely that you identify the best with the character who is also the first person narrator was that is what the author had intended it to be in the first place, think about any of the ways of narration, whether it is a short story or whether it is a movie, there is a way in which is already intended that the viewer, the reader should be identify himself or herself with certain characters, and that proposes achieve through various means, the first person narrative being one of those.

And this narrative structure is not a unique kind of narrative structure, it is that it shares with almost all kinds of military works, there is a picture langue right from the beginning of the story the end, there is a character, a protagonist who is also the first person narrator, the speaker, is the eye, but he is also, this time to die, he has been sentenced to death, so this is a very, very tricky when it comes to the narration in the Albert come who is a stranger, in fact , there is a first person, a narrator who begins narration in the same way and he has to and his narrative before his execution, and that is how, it was, that is how the plot can designed.

But here in this first personalitive, Pablo Ibbieta gets to complete his story and we do not know where he is now, from what content is narrating this and they are not the made privy to any other things because Pablo Ibbieta being this narrator who is completely in control of what he is to narrate and what he is to reveal, he also chooses to use this autonomy letting the read and know that he will only narrate this bit from that night, where his life in the prison begins and till that moment when he gets to know that he is not going to be executed than and we clearly have no idea about what happened him after that when he was taken to a regular court as we get to know from the story.

In Alexandra Agaroses as I say, the sense of an ending which is the reading of Sartres *The Wall*, this was published in 1988, he makes this very interesting observation about this short story, *Wall* is microcosmic version of the impossible reconciliation between a theory of experience which possess an essentially open future with the form of expression, which is finite, in fact, much of Sartres work can be seen to grapple with this issue.

So much has many have quarrels with this ending, it is also important to know that Sartre is willing to engage with this dilemma, it is of course, a story which is written during the early phase of his career and even before has existentialist theories that come into full fusion, even before they began to be translated and widely used across the world, and this is the one of his earliest works, and it could be argued very well that it is also one of those short stories, which exposes the kind of enquiries that Sartre or any others having similar questions had at the outset and this can be open and, this can be used as of those avenues which open up the narrative world and also the philosophical world for further enquiries and going deeper and going to analytical ways bringing this to elements, the ideas of existentialism and also the ideas of narrative theory.

I would like to wrap up after having offered one of the other alternative ways in which this confusion has been read and many critics also of the opinion that they are in the position to offer an interpretation of the stories conclusion, not necessarily seeing it as a flaw, not necessarily comparing it with the existentialist theories and philosophies that Sartre wrote about and believed it, and we need to recall that the central dilemma that the narrative protagonist is facing the wall is the fact that he is contempt to death, but he is keen not be executed, and we know too sure whether this is entirely he is doing or not.

And the reader is in that sense is also deprived of an authentic identification with Pablo because even though Pablo believes that he will be shot in the morning following the night,

during which most of the plot of the wall transpires, the reader also understands that, so far as he sees the world through Pablo's eyes, there is an unreachable disparity between what he knows and what Pablo thinks he knows, I repeat, there is an unreachable disparity between what he knows, what the reader knows that what Pablo thinks that the reader knows.

And this disparity is also the central dilemma of this narrative, I am taking this away from the many, many existential, our questions and the disputes and the theoretical dilemmas this is also about a reader-centric experience and also responding to some of the important critiques I can precisely this ending that, this ending the wall is very theatrical, very boojwah, very cheap and what if, however, the ending is very artificiality, they are very fictiveness, very strength and perhaps it is a central point, that is something that I wanted to pay attention, that I wanted to take your attention as when you are ready the story and when you are engaging with his ending was this artificiality, what is neatness that Sartre deliberately wanted to bring in, Sartre was clearly aware of what he was doing, and as pointed out by many, he was not always an agreement with this literature written for consumption and he was not always the those neat presentable plots always makes sense the roundness of a plots.

And here he chooses to engage with it, perhaps to make one point, maybe as a narrator, as a writer of fiction, Sartre also chooses to submit itself to the laws of fiction if there is any way in which we can name it thus and that is a deliberate thing, what Sartre does and just like the character Pablo who does this for farce who is telling the officers, go look for Ramon Gris in the cemetery, you may find him in a gravediggers shack, in that same pieces again, perhaps a farce that Sartre is playing with his own readers, trying to tell us, look at the neatness of it.

And look at how significant this is the perhaps taking you to very different things, maybe is also challenging the reader that is the reader to go, look for something which he thinks is not there, but just like it happens between Pablo and the officers, the readers is also end up saying more than perhaps the author, the author figure intended them to in the first place.

So while looking at this. I also encourages you to see this as a short story with a not, I also encourages you to look at this as a short story in not with a weak ending but with the powerful ending salvaging and an impossible story and this is very, very impossible, the neatness of this is very artificial, it is very cheap and it is also something that makes you feel good in a very strange way, but this is the artificiality, but perhaps that Sartre also wants to deal with and the consequences of set in interpretation of the wall, there are of two kinds and one level and suddenly it is not an insignificant one.

It is not possible to salvage the wall from its critical dustbin and instead on of seeing this as one of the least characteristics of Sartre's works we can wrap it situated in a different way and you can look at it as an experiment where it is also engaging within notion of fictive closure and he is trying to close the story in a very deliberate way and that can be seen as an experiment that how radically differs from the other characteristics of the work Sartre and at a broader level when we think about that second implication, the consequences of the second interpretation.

It said the wall can be seen as a very genuine attempt to figure the general, dilemma generated by any attempt to incarnate existentialist theory in fiction, we do not know even whether Sartre is trying to draw attention to that impossibility, the dilemma which is there when one tries to bridge the gap between existential theories and narrative techniques between fiction and existentialism, so I would go with those readings which argue that, instead of saying the ending as a flaw, instead of saying that is very boojwah and very cheap and very theatrical.

I would also go with those readings which think that, that is its strength, forcibly like Sartre to be able to write something like this to be able to bring in a deliberate neatness, a deliberate closure in this fiction and this theatricality, it is unabashed fictiveness that perhaps it, it is a greater strength, as I wrap this up, I leave you with this question from an Alexandra Agaroses essay, the sense of an ending, Sartre *The Wall*, published in 1988.

Furthermore if as a post of cannot we hypothesize that the esthetic driven human is not isolated phenomenon, then *The Wall* compels us to ask why the organism which according to the Sartre creates its most genuine system, when it refrains from repetition and fixity is the same organism which creates art a mode of experience, that is, by definition framed that is emyode within its own limits, *The Wall* is a short story which gains significant attention and a lot of critical druke, a lot of critical flak because of the ending and it is the ending I believe which make this a very strong one in terms of there is narrative experiment, in terms of this deliberate narrative fictive closure that it brings in even to the exchange of, even to the extent of asking uncomfortable questions which forces to link existentialism and narrative, with this we also wrap up today's lecture, I thank you for listening and look forward to seeing you in the next session.